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(54) **VENTILATED BRAKE ROTORS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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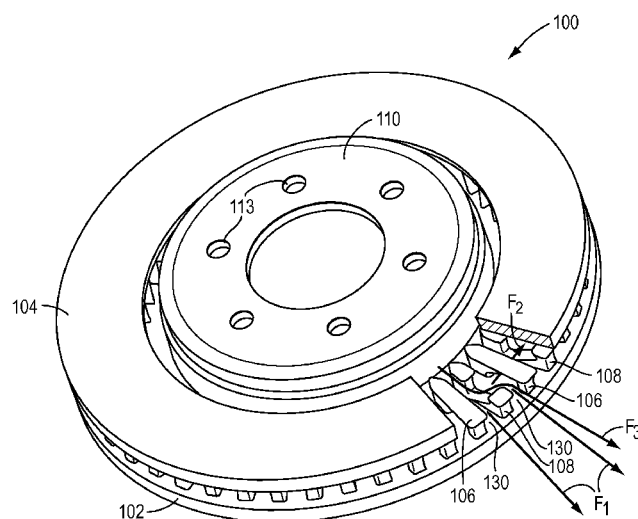
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F16D 65/847 (2006.01)
F16D 65/02 (2006.01)

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A brake rotor for attachment to a wheel of a vehicle may include an outer friction member and an inner friction member. The brake rotor may further include a plurality of fin elements connecting the outer friction member to the inner friction member. Each fin element may include first and second pillars that are connected by a bridge portion to define an opening in the fin element. The opening is configured to allow air to pass through the fin element.

25 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



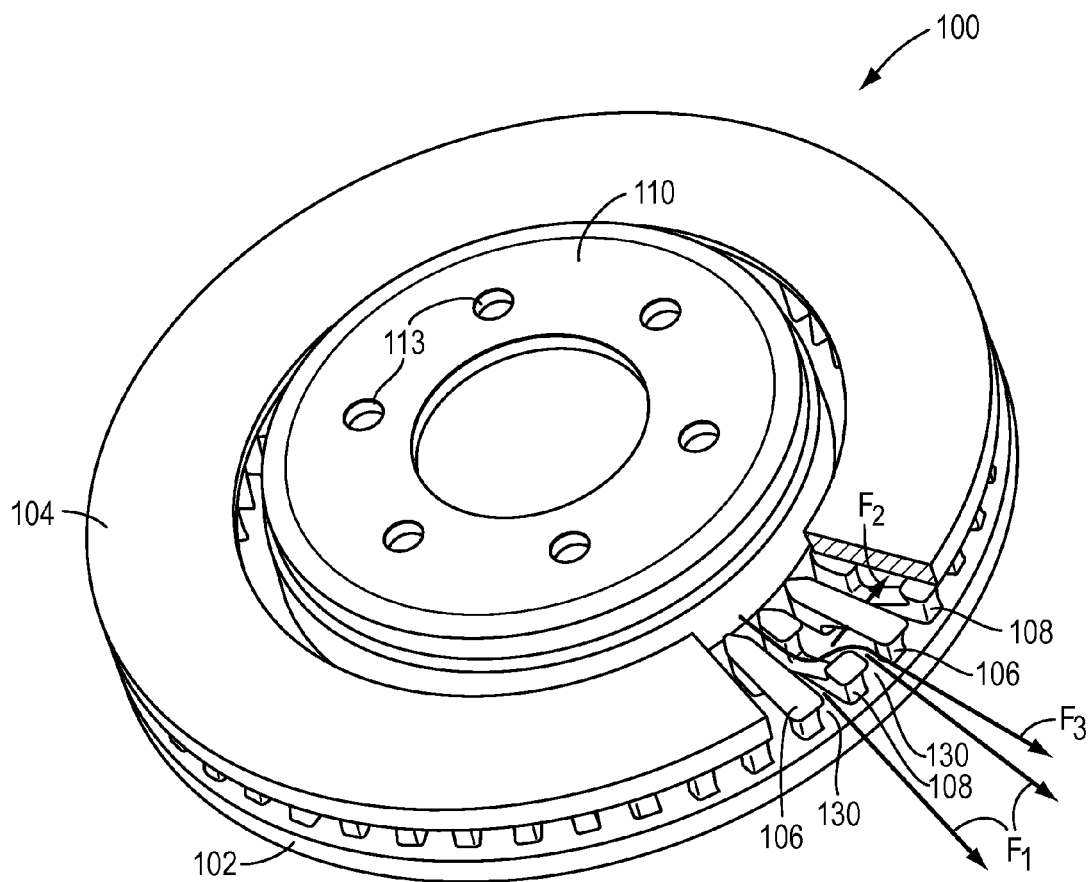


FIG. 1

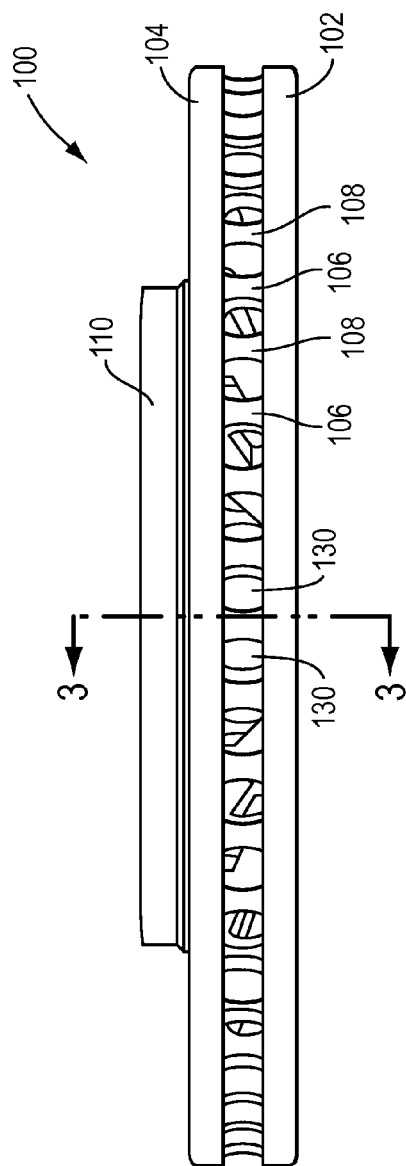


FIG. 2

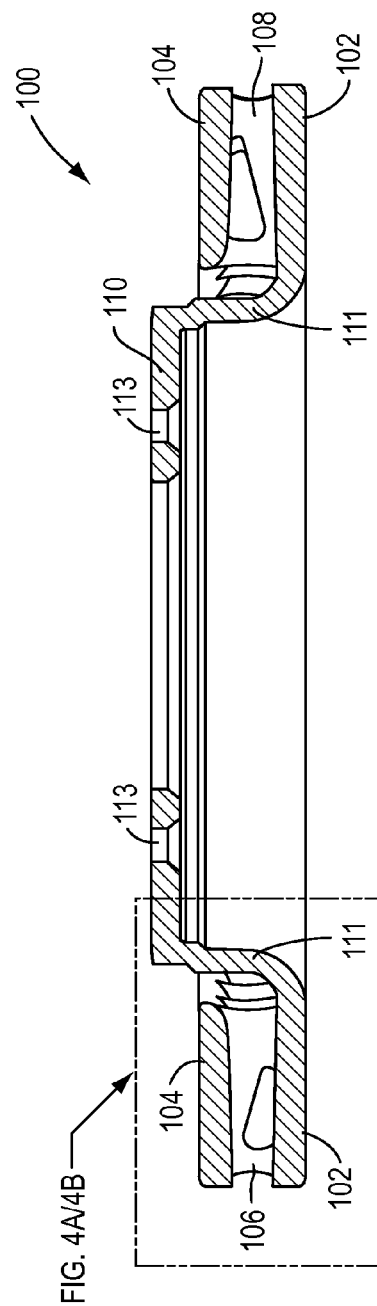


FIG. 3

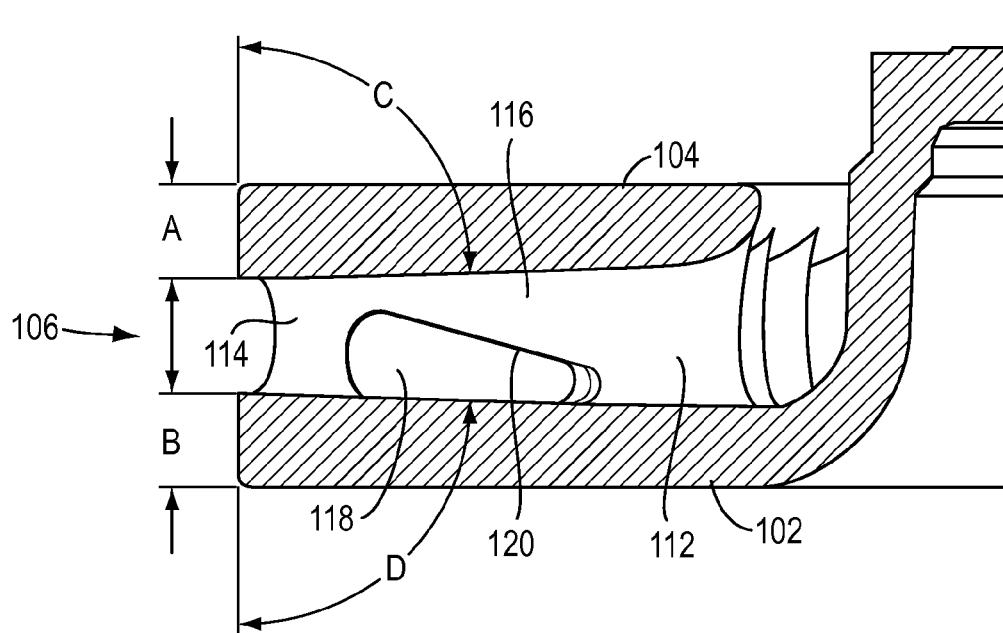


FIG. 4A

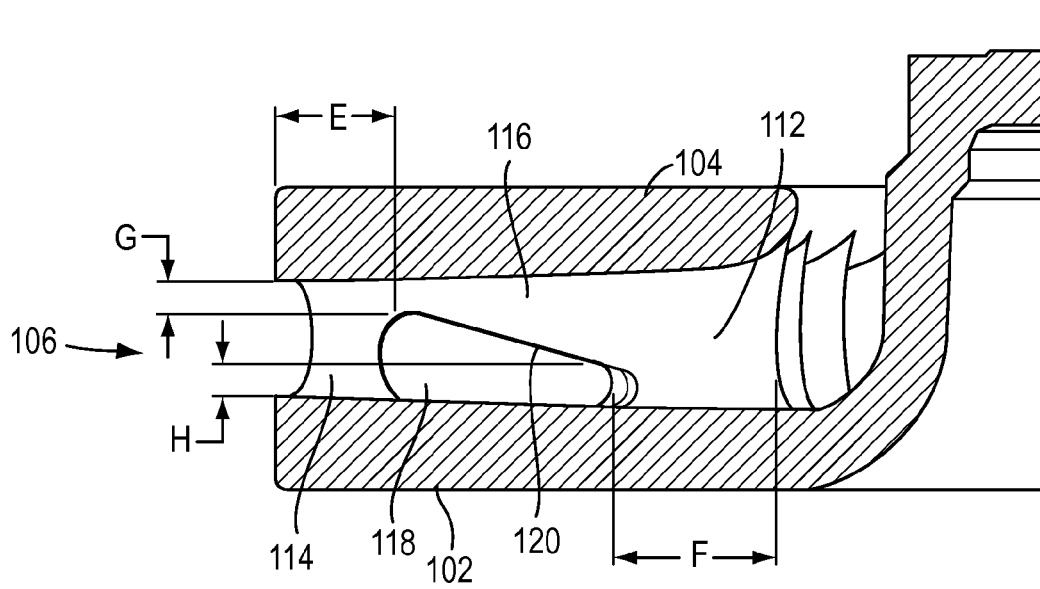


FIG. 4B

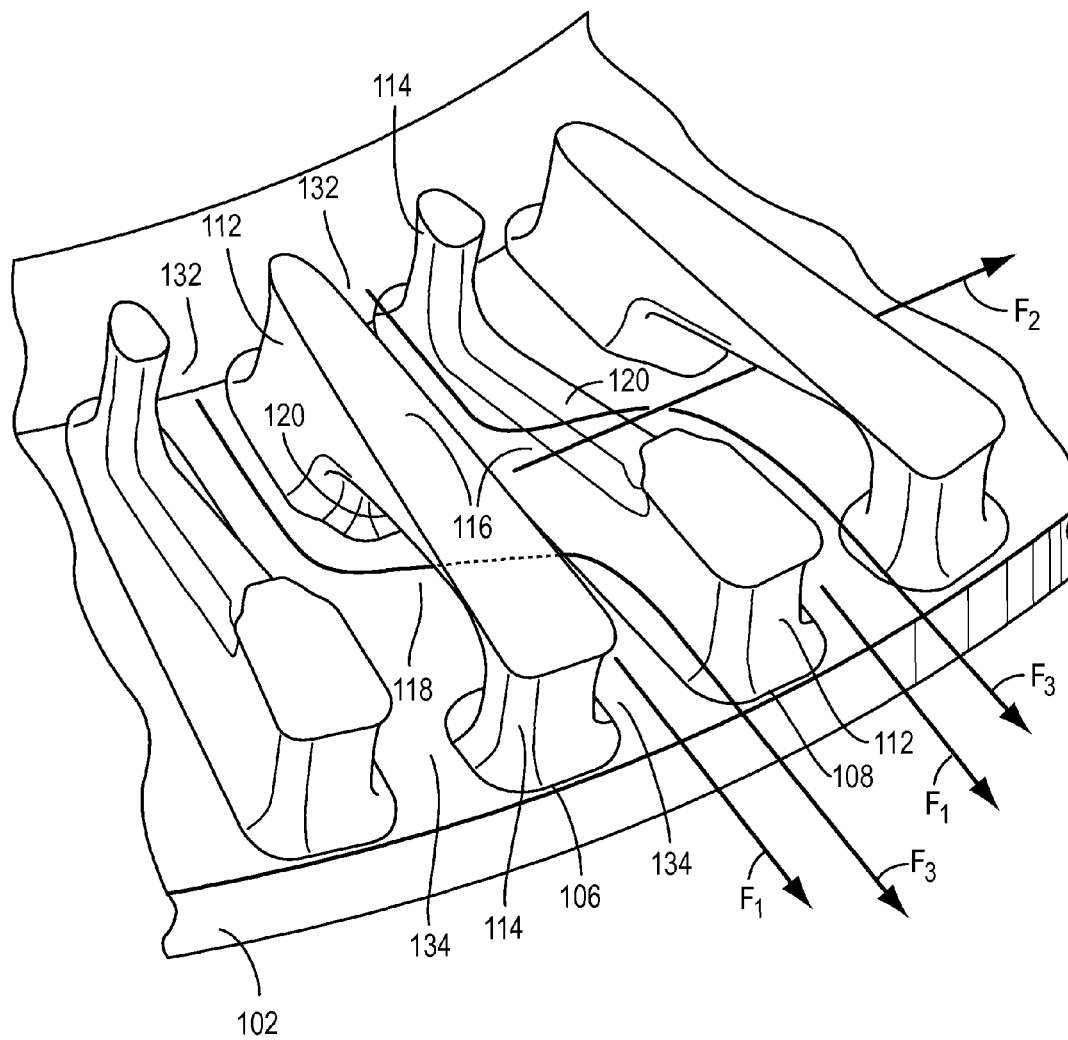


FIG. 5

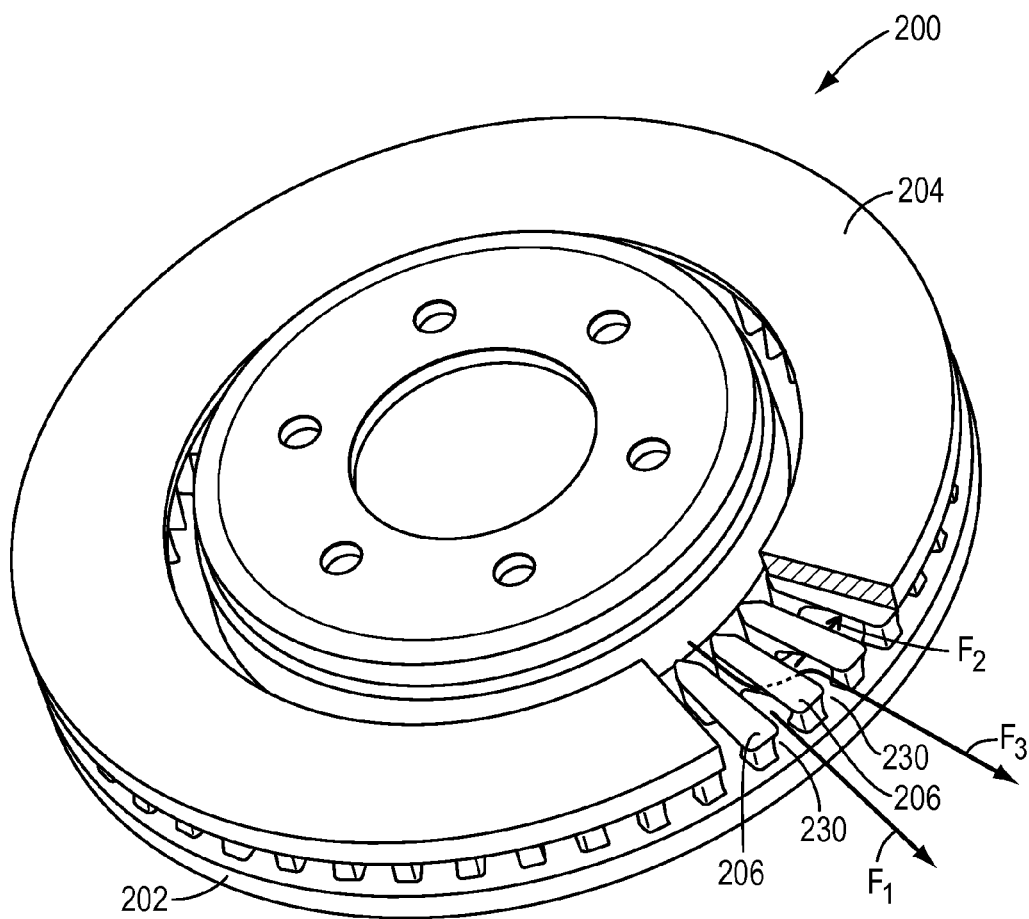


FIG. 6

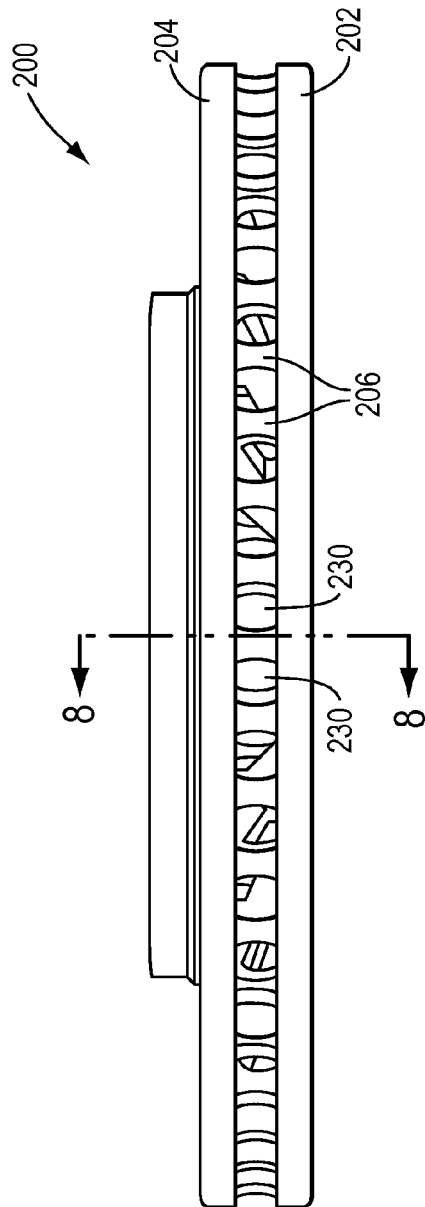


FIG. 7

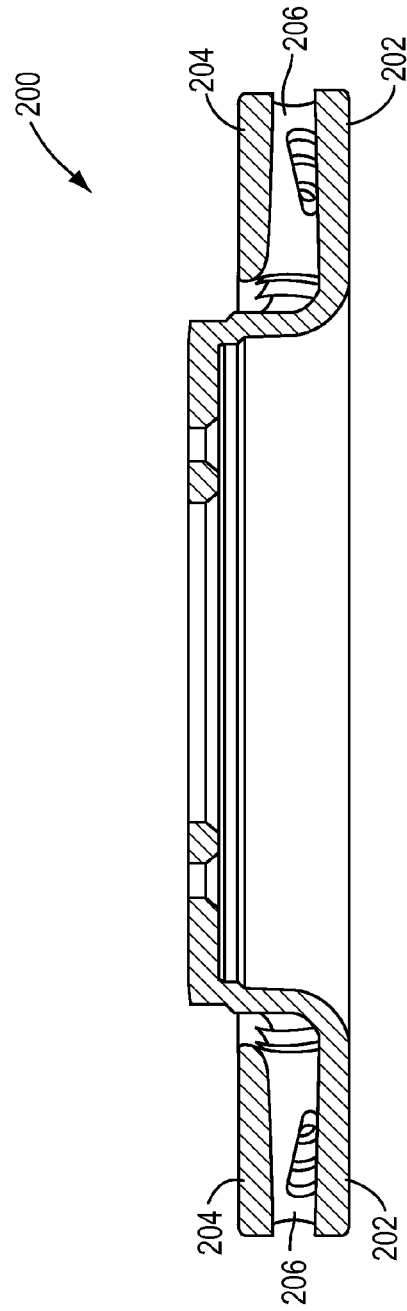


FIG. 8

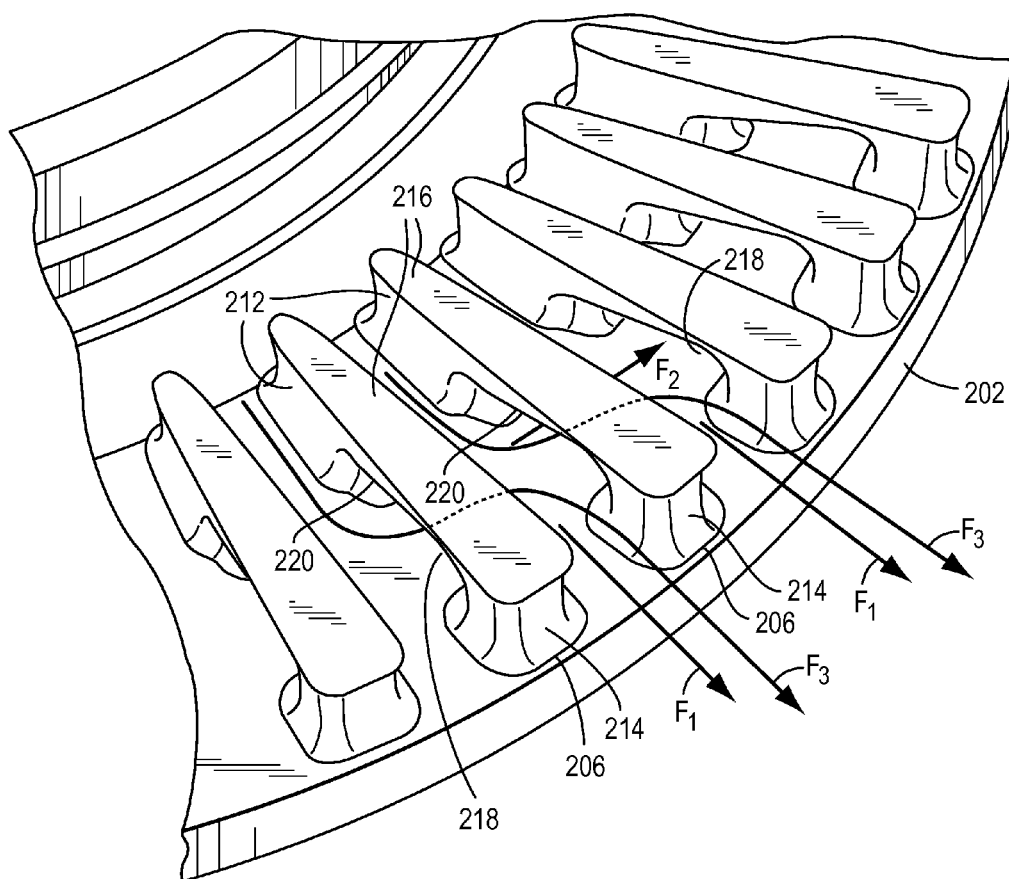


FIG. 9

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VENTILATED BRAKE ROTORS**TECHNICAL FIELD**

The present disclosure relates generally to vehicle brake rotors. More specifically, the present disclosure relates to ventilated brake rotors with heat dissipation fins and methods of manufacturing such rotors.

BACKGROUND

Brake rotors, or brake disks, are arranged to be mounted to and rotate with a wheel hub of a vehicle as part of the vehicle's braking system. Brake rotors, for example, generally include two oppositely-facing annular friction surfaces which, during operation of the brakes, are engaged by two blocks of friction material (e.g., brake pads) that are moved towards one another into contact with the two friction surfaces so that frictional forces occur and slow the rotation of the rotor, and hence the wheel of the vehicle. These frictional forces, however, may also cause the rotors, brake pads, and caliper (which houses the brake pads and fits over the rotor) to become very hot, which may lead to reduced braking efficiency. High temperatures, for example, may cause problems such as brake fade (temporary loss of braking due to the reduction of the friction coefficient between the friction material and the brake rotor), brake fluid vaporization, component wear (including thermal deformation of the brake rotors), and thermal judder (vibrations that the driver can feel and hear).

In order to reduce temperature/heat accumulation in the brake rotors that is caused by the frictional forces, rotors may include, for example, vents that are cast into the edge of the rotor to allow the heat that has built up on the metal of the rotor to escape. Conventional ventilated rotors may include, for example, friction members (which carry the oppositely-facing annular friction surfaces) that are arranged in a spaced-apart parallel relationship. The friction members are joined by vanes or fins therebetween, which form cooling ducts extending radially and outwardly of the rotor. The cooling ducts are arranged so that, as the rotor is rotated, air passes through the ducts and acts to cool the friction members.

Although such ventilated rotor designs provide some heat dissipation from the rotor (to help cool the friction members), the heat dissipation provided is limited by the amount of fin surface area exposed to the air flow passing through the ducts. The air flow through each duct is, for example, only exposed to one side of each fin, thereby limiting the amount of convective heat dissipation provided by each fin.

It may, therefore, be advantageous to provide a ventilated brake rotor with an enlarged heat dissipation area to dissipate more heat energy from the rotor. It may also be advantageous to provide a ventilated brake rotor design that reduces the mass of the rotor.

SUMMARY

In accordance with various exemplary embodiments, a brake rotor for attachment to a wheel of a vehicle may include an outer friction member and an inner friction member. The brake rotor may further include a plurality of fin elements connecting the outer friction member to the inner friction member. Each fin element may include first and second pillars that are connected by a bridge portion to define an opening in the fin element. The opening may be configured to allow air to pass through the fin element.

In accordance with various additional exemplary embodiments, a brake rotor for attachment to a wheel of a motor

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vehicle may include an outer annular disk and an inner annular disk. The brake rotor may further include a plurality of fin elements extending radially between the outer and inner disks and connecting the outer disk to the inner disk. Each fin element may include first and second pillars and a bridge portion connecting the first and second pillars. The bridge portion may form a ramp between the first and second pillars.

In accordance with various further exemplary embodiments, a method of manufacturing a brake rotor may include positioning a plurality of fin elements between an outer friction member of the brake rotor and an inner friction member of the brake rotor. Each fin element may include first and second pillars that are connected by a bridge portion to define an opening in the fin element. The fin elements may be arranged so that, as the rotor is rotated, an air flow path is created along a length of each fin element. The openings in the fin elements may be configured so that, as the rotor is rotated, an air flow path is created across each fin element.

Additional objects and advantages of the disclosure will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the disclosure. The objects and advantages of the disclosure will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the disclosure, as claimed.

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the disclosure and together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

At least some features and advantages will be apparent from the following detailed description of embodiments consistent therewith, which description should be considered with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a ventilated brake rotor in accordance with the present disclosure, with a portion of an inner friction member of the rotor broken away to show fin elements;

FIG. 2 is a side view of the brake rotor of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of the brake rotor of FIG. 1 taken through line 3-3 of FIG. 2;

FIGS. 4A and 4B show detailed views of a fin element of the brake rotor of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged, partial perspective view of the brake rotor of FIG. 1, with the inner friction member removed to show the fin elements;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of another exemplary embodiment of a ventilated brake rotor in accordance with the present disclosure, with a portion of an inner friction member of the rotor broken away to show fin elements;

FIG. 7 is a side view of the brake rotor of FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of the brake rotor of FIG. 6 taken through line 8-8 of FIG. 7; and

FIG. 9 is an enlarged, partial perspective view of the brake rotor of FIG. 6, with the inner friction member removed to show the fin elements.

Although the following detailed description makes reference to illustrative embodiments, many alternatives, modifications, and variations thereof will be apparent to those

skilled in the art. Accordingly, it is intended that the claimed subject matter be viewed broadly.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Reference will now be made in detail to various embodiments, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. The various exemplary embodiments are not intended to limit the disclosure. To the contrary, the disclosure is intended to cover alternatives, modifications, and equivalents.

In accordance with various exemplary embodiments, the present disclosure contemplates a ventilated brake rotor having an innovative fin design that may both reduce the mass of the rotor and improve the heat dissipation capacity of the rotor. For instance, the exemplary embodiments described herein utilize fin elements having an increased heat dissipation area (i.e., the area of each fin that is in contact with air flowing through each ventilation channel of the rotor). Various exemplary embodiments described herein, for example, contemplate a ventilated brake rotor comprising a plurality of fin elements, each fin element having first and second pillars that are connected by a bridge portion to define an opening in the fin element that may allow air to pass through the fin element. In this manner, as the rotor is rotated, an air flow path may be created both along a length of each fin element (i.e., between the fin elements) and across a width of each fin element (i.e., through the fin elements), thereby also generating turbulence across the fin elements to dissipate heat from the rotor. Furthermore, removing a portion of each fin element (i.e., to form the opening in each fin element) reduces the mass of each fin element, and the overall mass of the rotor itself.

FIGS. 1-5 illustrate an exemplary embodiment of a ventilated brake rotor **100** in accordance with the present disclosure. The brake rotor **100** includes an outer friction member **102** that is connected to an inner friction member **104** by a plurality of fin elements **106, 108**. The brake rotor **100**, for example, further includes a hub mounting surface **110** that extends from the outer friction member **102** to connect the brake rotor **100** to a wheel (not shown) of a motor vehicle (not shown). As best shown in the cross-sectional view of FIG. 3, the hub mounting surface **110** may be connected to the outer friction member **102** of the rotor **100** via, for example, a neck portion **111**. The hub mounting surface **110** may, for example, include a plurality of bore holes **113**, which are configured to receive lug bolts (not shown) to attach the rotor **110** to the wheel of the motor vehicle. In this manner, the outer friction member **102** is configured to face away from the vehicle when the rotor **100** is attached to the wheel, and the inner friction member **104** is configured to face towards the vehicle when the rotor **100** is attached to the wheel.

As illustrated in FIGS. 1-3, in various embodiments of the present disclosure, the outer and inner friction members **102** and **104** may respectively comprise outer and inner annular disks, and the fin elements **106, 108** may extend radially between the outer and inner disks to create a plurality of ventilation channels **130** between the disks. In this manner, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 5, the fin elements **106, 108** are arranged so that, as the rotor **100** is rotated (e.g., when the rotor **100** is attached to a wheel of a motor vehicle), an air flow path F_1 is created within the ventilation channels **130** along a length of each fin element, **106, 108**. In accordance with various embodiments, for example, as shown in FIG. 5, air inlets **132** to the ventilation channels **130** are provided at inner edges of the outer and inner friction members **102** and **104** so that the rotor **100** functions as a centrifugal fan driving air

outwardly through the ventilation channels **130** to air outlets **134** at outer edges of the outer and inner friction members **102** and **104**.

As shown best perhaps in FIGS. 4A, 4B, and 5, each of the fin elements **106, 108** includes respective first and second pillars **112** and **114** that are connected by a bridge portion **116**. The pillars **112, 114** and bridge portion **116** define an arched-shaped opening **118** in each respective fin element **106, 108** that is configured to allow air (i.e., from the ventilation channels **130**) to pass through the fin elements **106, 108**. In various embodiments, for example, the bridge portion **116** forms a ramp **120** between the first and second pillars **112** and **114**, such that the opening **118** has a rounded triangular shape. As shown in FIGS. 1 and 5, for example, the openings **118** in the fin elements **106, 108** are configured such that, as the rotor **100** is rotated (e.g., when the rotor **100** is attached to the wheel of the motor vehicle) an air flow path F_2 is created across a width of each fin element **106, 108**. For example, in various embodiments, multiple airflow paths F_2 are created around the rotor **100**, including, for example, a separate airflow path F_2 for each fin element **106, 108**; and an airflow path F_2 that extends through multiple fin elements **106, 108** as shown in FIGS. 1 and 5. In this manner, turbulence is also created across the fin elements **106, 108** to dissipate heat from the rotor **100**.

In other words, the fin elements **106, 108** are configured such that, as the rotor **100** is rotated, air flows partially within each ventilation channel **130** (along the airflow path F_1), and then partially through each opening **118** in the fin elements **106, 108** (along the airflow path F_2). The air flowing through the openings **118** (along the airflow path F_2) may then both partially continue through the adjacent openings **118** (i.e., around the rotor **100**) and partially out through the adjacent ventilation channel **130**. In this manner, the fin elements **106, 108** are configured such that, as the rotor **100** is rotated, an airflow path F_3 is also created that is a combination of airflow paths F_1 and F_2 (e.g., the airflow path F_1 may be extended by a length corresponding to the airflow path F_2) in order to dissipate more heat from the rotor **100**.

As illustrated in FIGS. 1-5, in accordance with various exemplary embodiments, the plurality of fin elements may include first and second alternating fin elements **106** and **108** arranged around a rotation axis of the rotor **100**, such that the bridge portion **116** of each first fin element **106** is coupled to the inner friction member **104** of the rotor **100** and the bridge portion **116** of each second fin element **108** is coupled to the outer friction member **102** of the rotor **100**. The present disclosure, however, contemplates brake rotors including any number, configuration (i.e., dimension and/or geometry), and/or orientation of fin elements **106, 108**. Those of ordinary skill in the art would understand, therefore, that the brake rotor **100** illustrated in FIGS. 1-5 is exemplary only and intended to illustrate one embodiment of the present disclosure. Accordingly, brake rotors in accordance with the present disclosure may have various configurations and/or orientations of friction members and fin elements without departing from the scope of the present disclosure and claims, and are not bound by any specific geometries and/or orientations.

For example, in accordance with various additional embodiments of the present disclosure, a ventilated brake rotor may include a plurality of fin elements all having the same orientation. As illustrated in FIGS. 6-9, for example, in various embodiments, a brake rotor **200** may include an outer friction member **202** that is connected to an inner friction member **204** by a plurality of fin elements **206** arranged around a rotation axis of the rotor **200** to create a plurality of ventilation channels **230**. As shown in FIG. 9, similar to the

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embodiment of FIGS. 1-5, each of the fin elements **206** includes respective first and second pillars **212** and **214**, which are connected by a bridge portion **216** to define an arched-shaped opening **218** in each fin element **206**. And, in various embodiments, the bridge portions **216** each form a ramp **220** between respective first and second pillars **212** and **214**.

Similar to the openings **118** described above, the openings **218** are configured to allow air (i.e., from the ventilation channels **230**) to pass through the fin elements **206**. Thus, similar to the rotor **100** of FIGS. 1-5, as the rotor **200** is rotated (e.g., when the rotor **200** is attached to a wheel of a motor vehicle), the fin elements **206** create an air flow path F_1 within the ventilation channels **230** along a length of each fin element **206**, and the openings **218** in the fin elements **206** create an air flow path F_2 across a width of each fin element **206** to create turbulence across the fin elements **206**. As above, in various embodiments, multiple airflow paths F_2 are created around the rotor **200**, including, for example, a separate airflow path F_2 for each fin element **206**; and an airflow path F_2 that extends through multiple fin elements **206** as shown in FIGS. 6 and 9.

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To verify and optimize the expected heat dissipation improvement and mass reduction of the ventilated brake rotors in accordance with the present disclosure versus conventional ventilated brake rotors, ventilated brake rotors in accordance with the present disclosure, similar to the brake rotors **100** (i.e., alternating fin elements) and **200** (i.e., one-way fin elements) illustrated and described above with reference to FIGS. 1-9 were modeled in a computational fluid dynamic (CFD) model using FLUENT® software. A reference conventional ventilated brake rotor was also modeled in a CFD model for comparison purposes. All CAD (Computer Aided Design) models were created using CATIA®.

Using the models, a design of experiment (DOE) was developed based on conventional manufacturing parameters (i.e., for molding the rotors) to test various rotor dimensions for optimization of: (1) mass flow rate of air through the fin elements, and (2) heat flux from the fin elements. Exemplary dimensions and tolerances A-H (see, e.g., FIGS. 4A and 4B) for the rotors **100** and **200** based on this analysis are presented below in Tables 1-3.

TABLE 1

Optimization of Mass Flow Rate								
Inner Friction Member Width, A [mm]	Outer Friction Member Width, B [mm]	Inner Friction Member Angle, C [deg]	Outer Friction Member Angle, D [deg]	Width of Second Pillar, E [mm]	Width of First Pillar, F [mm]	Height from Inner Friction Member to Ramp, G [mm]	Height from Outer Friction Member to Ramp, H [mm]	Predicted Max Mass Flow [kg/s]
10.6	10.6	88	88	9.3	12.8	1.2	5.3	0.054

TABLE 2

Optimization of Mass Heat Flux								
Inner Friction Member Width, A [mm]	Outer Friction Member Width, B [mm]	Inner Friction Member Angle, C [deg]	Outer Friction Member Angle, D [deg]	Width of Second Pillar, E [mm]	Width of First Pillar, F [mm]	Height from Inner Friction Member to Ramp, G [mm]	Height from Outer Friction Member to Ramp, H [mm]	Predicted Max Heat Flux [kWatts]
10.6	10.6	88	88	9.3	11.2	1.2	5.3	14.374

TABLE 3

Manufacturing Variations								
Inner Friction Member Width, A [mm]	Outer Friction Member Width, B [mm]	Inner Friction Member Angle, C [deg]	Outer Friction Member Angle, D [deg]	Width of Second Pillar, E [mm]	Width of First Pillar, F [mm]	Height from Inner Friction Member to Ramp, G [mm]	Height from Outer Friction Member to Ramp, H [mm]	
+/-0.4	+/-0.4	+/-1	+/-1	+/-0.8	+/-0.8	+/-0.8	+/-0.8	

Similar to the fin elements **106**, **108**, the fin elements **206** are also configured such that, as the rotor **200** is rotated, an airflow path F_3 is created that is a combination of airflow paths F_1 and F_2 (e.g., the airflow path F_1 may be extended by a length corresponding to the airflow path F_2) in order to dissipate more heat from the rotor **200**.

In various embodiments, as shown in FIGS. 6-9, the bridge portion **216** of each fin element **206** is coupled to the inner friction member **204**. Although not shown, those of ordinary skill in the art would understand that in various additional embodiments, the bridge portion **216** of each fin element **206** may instead be coupled to the outer friction member **202**.

The heat dissipation and mass of the optimized models were then compared with the reference model (i.e., of the conventional ventilated brake rotor) to verify the expected heat dissipation improvement and mass reduction of each of the rotor designs (i.e., the alternating fin elements and the one-way fin elements). Based on this comparison, it was predicted that the rotors with alternating fin elements (i.e., rotor **100**) would exhibit about 5.5% to about 8.3% more heat dissipation than the conventional rotor, and would weigh about 2.2% to about 12.3% less than the conventional rotor. Similarly, it was predicted that the rotors with one-way fin elements (i.e., rotor **200**) would exhibit about 7% to about

9.8% more heat dissipation than the conventional rotor, and would weigh about 1.3% to about 11.3% less than the conventional rotor.

As above, the present disclosure contemplates brake rotors having various dimensions and/or orientations of friction members and fin elements. Accordingly, the above dimensions and tolerances are not intended to be limiting of the present disclosure or the scope of the invention herein. Rather, the dimensions and tolerances represent exemplary embodiments of the various components depicted. Those having ordinary skill in the art would understand that modifications to such dimensions and tolerances may be made as desired and in accordance with the present disclosure without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

The present disclosure further contemplates methods of manufacturing a brake rotor, such as, for example, the brake rotors **100** and **200** described above with reference to FIGS. **1-9** in order to increase the convective heat dissipation of the rotor. In accordance with various exemplary embodiments, to increase the amount of heat dissipated from the brake rotor **100**, **200**, a plurality of fin elements **106**, **108**, **206** may be positioned between an outer friction member **102**, **202** of the brake rotor **100**, **200** and an inner friction member **102**, **202** of the brake rotor **100**, **200**. As above, each fin element **106**, **108**, **206** includes first and second pillars **112**, **212** and **114**, **214** that are connected by a bridge portion **116**, **216** to define a single arch-shaped opening **118**, **218** in the fin element **106**, **108**, **206**.

Thus, as the rotor **100**, **200** is rotated (e.g., when the rotor **100**, **200** is attached to a wheel of a motor vehicle), the fin elements **106**, **108**, **206** may create an air flow path F_1 along a length of each fin element **106**, **108**, **206** (i.e., within ventilation channels **130**, **230**), and the openings **118**, **218** in the fin elements **106**, **108**, **206** may create an air flow path F_2 across a width of each fin element **106**, **108**, **206** to create turbulence across the fin elements **106**, **108**, **206**. In various embodiments, for example, the openings **118**, **218** in the fin elements **106**, **108**, **206** may create multiple airflow paths F_2 around the rotor **100**, **200**, including, for example, a separate airflow path F_2 for each fin element **106**, **108**, **206**; and an airflow path F_2 that extends through multiple fin elements **106**, **108**, **206**. In other words, in various embodiments, air flow moves partially within each ventilation channel **130**, **230** (along an airflow path F_1), and then partially through each opening **118**, **218** in the fin elements **106**, **108**, **206** (along an airflow path F_2). The air flowing through the openings **118**, **218** (along the airflow path F_2) may then both partially continue through the adjacent openings **118**, **218** (i.e., around the rotor **100**, **200**) and partially out through the adjacent ventilation channel **130**, **230**. In this manner, an airflow path F_3 is created that is a combination of airflow paths F_1 and F_2 (e.g., the airflow path F_1 may be extended by a length corresponding to the airflow path F_2) in order to dissipate more heat from the rotor **100**, **200**.

As shown in the embodiment of FIGS. **1-5**, in various embodiments, the plurality of fin elements may include first and second alternating fin elements **106** and **108**, and the fin elements **106** and **108** may be positioned between the outer and inner friction members **102** and **104** such that the bridge portion **116** of each first fin element **106** is coupled to the inner friction member **104** and the bridge portion **116** of each second fin element **108** is coupled to the outer friction member **102**.

As shown in the embodiment of FIGS. **6-9**, in various additional embodiments, the plurality of fin elements may include fin elements **206** with the same orientation, and the fin elements may be positioned between the outer and inner

friction members **202** and **204** such that the bridge portion **216** of each fin element is coupled to the inner friction member **204**. Although not shown, in various further embodiments, the fin elements **206** may also be positioned between the outer and inner friction members **202** and **204** such that the bridge portion **216** of each fin element is coupled to the outer friction member **202**.

The brake rotors **100**, **200** may be manufactured using any known methods and/or techniques known to those of ordinary skill in the art. In various embodiments, for example, the brake rotors **100**, **200** may be cast from a molten metal, such as, for example, iron that is poured into a mold. In various additional embodiments, the brake rotors **100**, **200** may be molded from a composited material, such as, for example, reinforced carbon-carbon, or a ceramic matrix composite.

While the present disclosure has been disclosed in terms of exemplary embodiments in order to facilitate better understanding of the disclosure, it should be appreciated that the disclosure can be embodied in various ways without departing from the principle of the disclosure. Therefore, the disclosure should be understood to include all possible embodiments which can be embodied without departing from the principle of the disclosure set out in the appended claims. Furthermore, although the present disclosure has been discussed with relation to automotive vehicles, those of ordinary skill in the art would understand that the present teachings as disclosed would work equally well for any type of vehicle having a braking system that utilizes brake rotors.

For the purposes of this specification and appended claims, unless otherwise indicated, all numbers expressing quantities, percentages or proportions, and other numerical values used in the specification and claims, are to be understood as being modified in all instances by the term "about." Accordingly, unless indicated to the contrary, the numerical parameters set forth in the written description and claims are approximations that may vary depending upon the desired properties sought to be obtained by the present disclosure. At the very least, and not as an attempt to limit the application of the doctrine of equivalents to the scope of the claims, each numerical parameter should at least be construed in light of the number of reported significant digits and by applying ordinary rounding techniques.

It is noted that, as used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms "a," "an," and "the," include plural referents unless expressly and unequivocally limited to one referent. Thus, for example, reference to "a sensor" includes two or more different sensors. As used herein, the term "include" and its grammatical variants are intended to be non-limiting, such that recitation of items in a list is not to the exclusion of other like items that can be substituted or added to the listed items.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the system and method of the present disclosure without departing from the scope its teachings. Other embodiments of the disclosure will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the teachings disclosed herein. It is intended that the specification and embodiment described herein be considered as exemplary only.

What is claimed is:

1. A brake rotor for attachment to a wheel of a vehicle, comprising:
 - outer and inner friction members; and
 - a plurality of fin elements connecting the outer friction member to the inner friction member, each fin element

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comprising radially spaced first and second pillars that are connected by a single bridge portion to define an opening in the fin element;

wherein the opening is configured to allow air to pass through the fin element.

2. The brake rotor of claim 1, wherein the fin elements are arranged so that, as the rotor is rotated, an air flow path is created along a length of each fin element.

3. The brake rotor of claim 2, wherein the openings in the fin elements are configured so that, as the rotor is rotated, an air flow path is created across each fin element.

4. The brake rotor of claim 3, wherein the air flow path across each fin element is configured to generate turbulence across the fin elements.

5. The brake rotor of claim 1, further comprising a hub mounting surface extending from the outer friction member and configured for connection to the wheel of the vehicle.

6. The brake rotor of claim 1, wherein the outer and inner friction members respectively comprise outer and inner annular disks, and wherein the fin elements extend radially between the outer and inner disks.

7. The brake rotor of claim 1, wherein the plurality of fin elements includes first and second alternating fin elements, and

wherein the bridge portion of each first fin element is coupled to the inner friction member and the bridge portion of each second fin element is coupled to the outer friction member.

8. The brake rotor of claim 1, wherein an orientation of each fin element is the same.

9. The brake rotor of claim 8, wherein the bridge portion of each fin element is coupled to the outer friction member.

10. The brake rotor of claim 8, wherein the bridge portion of each fin element is coupled to the inner friction member.

11. The brake rotor of claim 1, wherein the bridge portion forms a ramp between the first and second pillars.

12. The brake rotor of claim 1, wherein the opening has a straight side and a tapered side.

13. A brake rotor for attachment to a wheel of a motor vehicle, comprising:

outer and inner annular disks; and

a plurality of fin elements extending radially between the outer and inner disks and connecting the outer disk to the inner disk, each fin element comprising first and second pillars and a bridge portion connecting the first and second pillars,

wherein the bridge portion tapers along an entire length between the first and second pillars.

14. The brake rotor of claim 13, wherein the pillars and the bridge portion define an opening in each respective fin element.

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15. The brake rotor of claim 14, wherein the openings in the fin elements are configured so that, as the rotor is rotated, an air flow path is created across each fin element.

16. The brake rotor of claim 15, wherein the air flow path across each fin element is configured to generate turbulence across each fin element.

17. The brake rotor of claim 13, further comprising a hub mounting surface extending from the outer friction disk and configured for connection to the wheel of the vehicle.

18. The brake rotor of claim 13, wherein the plurality of fin elements includes first and second alternating fin elements, and

wherein the bridge portion of each first fin element is coupled to the inner disk and the bridge portion of each second fin element is coupled to the outer disk.

19. The brake rotor of claim 13, wherein the bridge portion of each fin element is coupled to the outer disk.

20. The brake rotor of claim 13, wherein the bridge portion of each fin element is coupled to the inner disk.

21. The brake rotor of claim 13, wherein the outer disk is configured to face away from the vehicle when the rotor is attached to the wheel, and wherein the inner disk is configured to face towards the vehicle when the rotor is attached to the wheel.

22. A method of manufacturing a brake rotor, comprising: positioning a plurality of fin elements between outer and inner friction members of the brake rotor such that a lengthwise direction of each fin extends radially from a center of the brake rotor, each fin element comprising first and second pillars that are connected by a bridge portion to define an opening in the fin element,

wherein, each bridge portion extends from an interior surface of one of the friction members, and wherein each opening is further defined by an opposing interior surface of the other of the friction members.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the plurality of fin elements includes first and second alternating fin elements, and

wherein the positioning comprises positioning the fin elements such that the bridge portion of each first fin element is coupled to the inner friction member and the bridge portion of each second fin element is coupled to the outer friction member.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the positioning comprises positioning the fin elements such that the bridge portion of each fin element is coupled to the inner friction member.

25. The method of claim 22, wherein the positioning comprises positioning the fin elements such that the bridge portion of each fin element is coupled to the outer friction member.

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